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David M. Wilks
President, Energy Supply

4053 Table Mountain Drive
Golden, CO 80403

October 19, 2001

Ms. Carol Hanlon
U. S. Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office (M/S #025)
P.O. Box #0307
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036-0307

Subject: Xcel Energy comments on the Possible Site Recommendation
for Yucca Mountain

Dear Ms. Hanlon:

Xcel Energy (Xcel), is pleased to submit these comments to the Department of Energy (DOE) on the Possible Site Recommendation for Yucca Mountain (66 Fed. Reg. 43,851 – August 21, 2001 and 66 Fed. Reg. 45,845 – August 30, 2001).

The Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) is responding in detail to the notice and the underlying documents. Xcel strongly endorses the comments submitted by NEI on behalf of the entire nuclear energy industry. Xcel Energy would like to emphasize NEI's statement that the Yucca Mountain suitability decision should be made on the basis of science not politics. The scientific and engineering information contained in these reports constitutes a technically and legally sound basis for concluding that a repository at Yucca Mountain can protect both the health and safety of the public and workers.

Xcel Energy owns three nuclear units, the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant (1 unit) and the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant (2 units). These plants are operated for Xcel by the Nuclear Management Company, LLC (NMC). These plants are located in Minnesota and are impacted by MN State legislation that limits the quantity of spent nuclear fuel that can be stored at the sites. Xcel is faced with the premature shutdown of these plants (i.e., before expiration of the NRC operating license) due to DOE's inability to fulfill its statutory obligations of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act (NWPA) to dispose of spent nuclear fuel. This represents an unnecessary burden on the owners, operators of the plants, and the ratepayers in the affected Xcel service territory. DOE must continue to make progress on the Yucca Mountain program to limit this burden.

Xcel Energy would be pleased to address any questions the DOE may have concerning these comments

Sincerely,

David Wilks